

MITSUHARA MISAWA! and TOSHIKI KAWADA! get it on in the Tokyo Dome! SHINJIRO OHTANI! pouts a lot at YUJI YASARAOKA! DIASUKE IKEDA! beats the holy crap out of TIGERMASK IV! TOM ZENK! tries to hang with ARN ANDERSON! and other stuff!

ALOHA~!

WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #75!

HEY! This is gonna be a fun-filled jaunt through the annals of grappling video tape as Phil the Ripper jumps on full time with bunches of insight and acerbic wit. And Pogo Pete makes a guest appearance as he and Reverend Ray got in some New Japan TV (Glenn!) viewing in between Gojira movies, I'm figuring. Schneider continues his trek into the darkest parts of wrestling as he tackles IWA Mid-South's King Of The DeathMatch Tourney. I visited deeply with the tapes that have the BattlARTS as the love affair continues and I also get to tackle the beautiful Kawada vs Misawa ass-stomp and the El Hijo del Santo vs Negro Casas ass-stomp and stuff. I'm stoked! WOO-HOO! And now a word from Pogo Pete and Reverend Ray.....

@#@@#@#@@ NEW JAPAN TV- 4/4/98
(REV RAY! And POGO PETE!)

Yup, Dueling critics this week as I hung out with Pete to pick up Summerslam tickets on the second day and end up 50 miles up. This week's fun is a whole bunch of Jr's beatin' the crap out of each other.

Jushin Thunder Lyger vs. Kendo Ka Shin:

Hey, here's a surprise, Kendo Ka Shin does a lot of flying cross armbreakers. I didn't know he did that move. The shotays would be a lot cooler if it didn't take 20 minutes for the impact to reach the 65,000 people in the upper deck who actually get into this. So it's lost on the 500 corporate folks who paid 15 million billion yen per seat just to see Inoki RETIRE ALREADY, DAMMIT! The match is good and all, but Ray finds it a bit hard to get excited about Ka Shin. I mean, hey, how about an armbreaker! Here's an equation: Hiro Saito is to Sentons as Kendo Ka Shin is to? If you guessed right, give yourself a cookie. Things of note from the match: Kendo did come up with some cool forearm uppercuts while he had Lyger stretched out on the apron. Lyger got him in a corner, shotayed him down and then drop kicked him square in the face. That had to suck. He got Lyger in the face and to the back of the head. Lyger went for a top rope move and Kendo "UN FOUL!"ed him. Eventually, Lyger got in control, shotayed the hell out of him, and hit a SUPAFISHAMANBUSTA!!!!!! for a 2. Kendo kicked out, so Lyger gave him a cool shotay in the corner and officially killed him dead with a 2nd buster.

Takaiwa vs. Koji Kanemoto:

It's the battle of the Visiting Jr. Killers! This is a 17-minute match, but we get to see 2 minutes because we've got to show the great nWo ring entrance. Takaiwa is in the process of going powerbomb crazy. The Endless Powerbomb is sort of those moves Ray half likes and half

hates. It's cool because you beat the fudge out of someone, but if Takaiwa is not pulling the guy with out them grabbing his hands to help him, it looks about contrived as the Van Daminator and that lame Sabu leg drop where the guy holds on to the top rope and only Billy Kidman has made look semi good. They totally screw up the top rope reverse rana, but in a not Ahmed Johnson kind of way. Takaiwa sort of falls and lands on his back on Koji, not on his head like El Samurai. Pete dubbed it the USA Network bump as it had a 7-second delay on him falling. The abbreviated version of the match ends with Takaiwa doing the endless powerbomb and hardway pulling up Koji (so it didn't annoy Ray) and then powerbombing Koji into the corner buckles. Takaiwa wins the match with a sick looking super Death Valley driver which puts 99% of US versions of the move to shame. Post match, Koji decides the dick factor of the match isn't high enough, so they slap each other in the face and shake hands and then do the "I don't want to shake his hand, so I'm gonna throw it away" dick move. And these guys are partners!

Yuji Yasuraoka vs. Shinjiro "Kobashito" Ohtani:

As much as the other match was clipped, this was even more butchered. At the start, Yuji slaps Ohtani because he knows he's gonna be in total puss boy mode in the match. This was clipped probably for a good reason because Ohtani going to beat John Tatum's record for longest bionic pout. Basically, we get the finish, Yuji hits a few of his Bounce Up The Ropes moves and hits a dragon suplex in full "check out my area" cam. They slap each other a whole lot on the top rope, with Yuji falling in the ring and Ohtani "conveniently" landing on the apron. Kobashito hits the springboard leg lariat and puts him away with the dragon suplex. It's matches like these that make you wonder why Takaiwa and Kanemoto hang out with Ohtani. Pete figures that Ohtani must be Takaiwa and Kanemoto's designated driver for the times that they go out, get hammered on saki and sing karaoke with the LADIEEEEEES while Ohtani sits in the corner drinks milk and wishes he was as much of a mack daddy surley punk ass. Be all the dick that you can be, Shinjiro, not the puss.

Masa Chono and Keiji Mutoh vs. Osamu Nishimura and Shinya Hashimoto: Hey, it's really cool when you play George Mayfield's theme tape because it looks like Chono's kicking the crap out of Osamu in time to his music! We were too busy listening to the cassette and reading Pete's Lady Gongs to pay attention. Hashimoto doesn't kick the hell out of enough people and it's primarily Nishimura working for their team. Chono gets Nishimura to tap out to what looked like a reverse WAR Special. Bischoff shakes Mutoh's hand at the match, so it's already lost a million billion stars, so let's just call the whole thing off.

&*~&*~&*~&* ALL JAPAN TV 5/3/98 (taped 5/1/98,Tokyo Dome)
(DEAN RASMUSSEN)

Kawada vs Misawa:

This was for the Triple Crown and Misawa is pretty busted up from ruining his knee at Carnival and EVERYBODY knew Kawada's getting the straps, the trophies, the certificates of participation and McDonald's Giant Baba Beanie Babies that go along with being the Triple Crown Holder- Best Wrestler On the Face Of The Earth so- with all this going against it- it, of

course, totally fuckin ruled. This doesn't challenge the all-time great TC match from 1994 but what on God's Green Earth does? This does supply the psychology, the stiffness, and the Misawa and Kawada required to make this work in the context of a comparison to the body of work THESE TWO have assembled over the span of their braincrushingly beautiful careers. It starts being great right from the get go as Kawada tries to Wahoo McDaniel chop Misawa across the chest and Misawa counters by crushing Kawada's Orbital socket with Everybody's Favorite Stiffest Elbow- harkening back to the match where Kawada crushed Misawa's Orbital socket legit. Misawa busts up Kawada early, leading up to the greatest tope ever by anyone who isn't Ciclon Ramirez as he crushes Kawada against the rail at a hundred miles per hour. All the while, Misawa is already selling the knee even before Kawada can kick it or anything. Misawa beats the hell out of him for a while until Kawada gets his first offensive transition by hitting a spinning kick to the head. Kawada then tries some big moves that Misawa counters and are countercountered by Kawada kicking him in the face really hard. Which you gotta love. Misawa starts hitting Kawada with elbows out of nowhere which isn't the smoothest transition I've ever seen by old Mitsuhashi but anyway. Kawada goes on the offensive after taking a couple of suplexes by reversing a suplex attempt into his own suplex and a kick to the head for good measure, Misawa goes to the elbows and goes into his Assorted Numbered Tiger Suplexes and Drivers sequence shtickt and Kawada says "Fuckit" and Dragonscrews Misawa's bad knee. I gotta love that. Kawada goes whole hog, wrenching Misawa's bum knee everywhich way leading up to his Toothless Figure Four. Misawa escapes and is thoroughly pissed and goes back to Misawa by Numbers until Kawada kicks him in the head again. Kawada figures out that Misawa's only weapon left is his elbows so he starts off with a cross-armbreaker and renders Misawa totally useless with a bunch of pump handle arm-breakers. This is a point of All Japan psychology that shows why it's the deepest ever in wrestling- they deconstruct the match down to Kawada isn't gonna work on the leg because it's obviously hurt and it would taint what would be his first REAL win in a singles match against Misawa; Misawa is too strong even hurt so Kawada goes for the cheaper win by going for his knee; as he tries that, it becomes apparent that Kawada can't beat him even by working on his ruined knee so they deconstruct it down to Misawa's primary weapon and it isn't his leg, so Kawada resumes NOT working on the leg; it finally kills Misawa after the Elbow is rendered useless so Kawada's win is suddenly DE-tainted if you REALLY think about it too much. I love that kind of crap. Kawada gets in three kicks to the face for every offensive attempt- which is the sign that Misawa ain't gonna last. Misawa kicks out of the first Powerbomb but the second one kills him dead. Golly, I wish there was a way for Misawa to lose more because I think he is at his best when he desperate and fighting for his life. THAT was the key to the greatness of the 95 tag final. This match suffered from the obvious outcome but it didn't hurt it as much as it could have. The psycholgy of Kawada not going for the knee until he had to was a nice touch, as was the way they integrated the whole Elbow as Deadliest Offense for Misawa In Any Condition into the psychology of the match. A healthy Misawa would have made for a truly classic match since the timing would be right for the biggest one, but this is the best that the constraints could produce and these two make it a great match. You wanna see ALLL this.

Kenta Kobashi/ Johmmy Ace vs Vader/ Stan Hansen:

This started off limping through the gate with Stan Hansen looking like Hansen 98, Johnny Ace working more loosely than his shitty, no-working brother, and Kenta Kobashi doing all those irritating spots that keep him from entering my upper echelon of favorite wrestlers. Luckily, there was an actual Vader sighting and the big man showed up to wrestle so this got to be pretty good and exciting by the end. Kobashi and Vader had some neat spots where Vader would kick his pansy ass and Kobashi would try to suplex him. Kobashi really kicks it into gear after Hansen goes all garbage style with a table and Kobashi starts looking like someone who should have a frickin Triple Crown (though not as soon as he did) and Vader beats the living crap out of Ace-hitting a PHAT ASS Backdrop Driver. After a bunch of near falls, they do the goof ball US ending of Vader accidentally crushing Hansen, setting Kobashi for the pin eventually. This wasn't great or anything, but Vader still is great when he wants to be or when the situation arises so that's a comfort and this was a good little match by the end.

@#@#@#@#@ IWA MIDSOUTH-KING OF THE DEATH MATCH COMMERCIAL TAPE
(10/21/97 New Albany, IN)
(PHIL SCHNEIDER)

The sickest carnival blood freak wrestling league in the U.S. put on their sickest blood freak show ever, as fat redneck truck drivers killed themselves in front of a group of sicko vampire blood thirsty junior psychos. I feel a lot seamier watching All-American garbage wrestling than I do watching Japanese garbage wrestling. Big Japan and their ilk is weird and foreign; there is a whole Samurai/Ninja thing that makes it acceptable. You don't know and will never meet anyone like Mitsuhura Matsunaga. However, we all had guys like Mad Man Pondo in our home rooms. Dumpy, camaro-driving, cigarette-smoking, dim bullies that you could tell would end up driving a truck or putting up drywall, but somehow they ended up in a high school gymnasium in Kentucky, jamming thumbtacks in some guy's head. The familiarity is what makes it so unnerving.

Ian Rotten vs. Cash Flow (Thumbtack, Thumbtack bat match):

Cash Flow is YALWBHHG (Yet Another Lane White Boy Hip-Hop Gimmick). Ian Rotten is the promoter and star of this little corner of hell. One of the best matches on the tape. You can't compare these matches to anything else, so it wasn't good in the way Liger v. Ohtani is good or even the way Dick Murdoch vs. Dusty Rhodes is good- this was good in the way Shoji Nakamaki v. Hiroshi Ono was good- lots of blood and a couple of insane bumps, plus some pretty good brawling. IWA fans bring homemade plunder like ECW fans, however-while ECW fans will bring a VCR or a plank of wood- the IWA fans bring homemade torture devices that you know they fantasize about using on the girl who bags groceries the shift before they do- that stuck up cocktease who smiled at them, but then said she had a boyfriend when they asked her out. The thumbtack baseball bat was one of these homemade implements of pain, it is a red whiffle ball bat with thumbtacks duck taped to it. It was neat because you could hit someone really hard with it and you wouldn't break their leg, but you could tell it would hurt like hell. Rotten gets another fan invention (glass lightbulb bat) smashed on his arm, busting his shoulder up. They do some okay brawling with both guys taking some pretty good thumbtack bumps. The

ref makes a count and gets a thumbtack stuck in his hand. The end has Cash Flow taking a couple of nasty bumps, a curtain call into the thumbtacks, and an insane Death Valley driver into the thumbtacks. My big problem with this match is that they don't have the usually obligatory close up of the thumbtacks being removed, which sucks- if you are going to have a thumbtack match, you have to show them being removed from your skull.

Rollin Hard vs. Bull Pain (Thumbtack, Thumbtack bat match):

Bull Pain is a guy who has been kicking around Southern Indies for years. He looks like a methamphetamine dealer and is a really bad wrestler. Rollin Hard is a big fat white guy who comes to the ring to the Sanford and Son anthem and has a huge afro wig; it is a nasty, racist little gimmick and it gives the announcers a chance to spout some prejudiced crap. He doesn't wrestle with the Afro and just looks like a fat kid in the ring. This match sucked- lackluster brawling and a lot of blood, basically a really bad ECW match. The end comes when Rollin does the worst swinging DDT in the history of swings- into the thumbtacks. Yuck. May Bull Pain never grace my television again.

Balls Mahoney vs. War Machine 1 (Barbwire board, Barwire Bat match):

Balls Mahoney is the worst wrestler in ECW, War Machine is this guy with a bad mask. This match sucked it long, hard and thoroughly. Both guys took real tentative bumps into the barbwire and weak shots from the bat. End comes when Balls gives Machine a Dr. Wagner variation Michinoku Driver on the bat; Machine doesn't really take the bump on the bat though , just hitting it with his back.

Doug Gilbert vs. Ox Harley (Barbwire board, Barbwire Bat match)

Better then the last match as both guys take better bumps into the barbwire. Not much of a match though. Both guys bleed a ton, but Gilbert does a lot of Southern Heel shtick which doesn't work at all in the context of a Death Match Tourney. Gilbert wins with a pretty good piledriver on a barbed wire board.

Axl Rotten v. War Machine (4 corners of pain):

Lackluster brawl which was a little better then the previous War Machine match, mainly for War Machine's nasty gash on his shoulder, nothing else was that good, some okay mousetrap bumps.

Mad Man Pondo vs. Tower of Doom (4 corners of pain):

Mad Man Pondo looks like a fat Tracy Smothers, Tower of Doom is more like Double Wide Trailer of Doom, as he isn't nearly tall enough to deserve the nickname. Starts real bad but picks up a tad at the end. Powerbomb through the barbwire board is the ending du-jour.

Mad Man Pondo vs. Doug Gilbert (No Rope Barbwire, Glass Spiderweb):

Doug Gilbert is still deeply in Austin Idol Jr. mode. But Pondo bumps for two as he gets shoved off the ring apron and crotches the spiderweb, which looked like it hurt a bunch. Gilbert gives Pondo the hot-shot on the barbwire for the duke. Pretty good for this show, Gilbert needs to cut the shit in this kind of match.

Ian Rotten vs. Rollin Hard (No Rope Barbwire, Glass Spiderweb):

Probably the best match on this tape, Ian Rotten actually busts out a bunch of wrestling in this match, hitting a drop toe hold into a half nelson, and then he drives a piece of glass into the back of Hard's neck. He also does a drop kick on the knee and put on a kneebar like an obese, blood soaked Nobuhiro Takada. This match ends with the craziest spot of the tourney and an entry in the craziest garbage spots of all time: Rotten throws the glass spiderweb into the ring and gives Rollin a Redneck Driver 98 right into the glass, surely imbedding shards of glass into his skull and damn near killing the portly minstrel. Bloodily beautiful. This match had all you want in a garbage fest.

Ian Rotten v. Axl Rotten (Barbedwire, Lightbulb match):

A bunch of angled shit leads to this final. Not as good as I had hoped, real bloody, but most of the match consisted of them pushing each others heads into the lightbulb. It's something I bet hurts real bad but doesn't really look that cool. Gilbert runs in and attacks both guys, which really sucks, there is no need for a screw job in this type of match. Disappointing final. The whole card was very mediocre with only a couple of the big bumps that make these kind of matches great. Kind of cool for the whole human cockfight aspect but nothing special.

@#@#@#@#@# BATTLARTS BATTLESTATION 1/21/98 by Dean!

BattlARTS is fast approaching EMLL, the NJ Juniors, GAIA and the WCW Cruiserweights +Benoit as my personal favorite federation (as opposed to objective Best In The World which is... ahh you know the drill.)- surpassing the limboized Michinoku Pro and the Tajiri-less Big Japan. BattlARTS has done exactly what Michinoku Pro did- take a bunch of faceless guys who can work and created a cool style that is geared directly towards their people's strengths- creating it's own standards of psychology and creating some really cool matches on it's own terms that would REALLY not work anywhere else. It has also done what MP pulled off when it started up by really doling out huge wads of FUN in their wrestling- which is a factor that one can easily overlook in this age of STUPID wrestling. The major difference is that they take out almost all the high-flying and lucha leanings of Michinoku Pro and replace it with METRIC TONS of stiffness. It's UWFi shootstyle with a smile on it's face. It's All Japan stiffness without the crustacean up it's butt. It's...

Diasuke Ikeda/ Mohamad Yone vs Yamoru Okamoto/ Okuto Hidaka:

Diasuke Ikeda is SOO all that and a bag of chips. This starts off crappy with Yone and Okamoto not really hitting the level of stiffness that is required to make this style compelling. They fumble around a bit, showing their greenness- though Okamoto does the Twist between getting in his kicks, so I would keep an eye on him. He is quite stylish for a youngster. Ikeda comes in and shows his boys how to properly kick the flying crap out of someone and this baby heats up. Hidaka is the super scrawny, high-flying shootboy so your face really lights up when Ikeda gets a hold of him- kinda like when Fukuaoka gets off that final Moonsault stomp on Commander Boirshoi. You shouldn't enjoy it this much, but something sick and twisted deep inside you says,

"Oh yeah. I'm all over this. Yep." The ending gets all hot and almost makes up for the slow beginning and spotty middle as Yone and Hidaka trade submission roll-ups as ludicrously beautiful as any attempted by Halloween as of late. These are three guys to keep an eye on... but maybe not in this match.

Takeshi Ono vs Naohiro Hoshikawa:

I was stoked beyond recognition about this match because Hoshikawa has always showed a lot of promise and flashes of brilliance in Michinoku Pro and Takeshi is such a scrawny, surly punkass that this HAD to rule it. It doesn't reach my ridiculously high expectations but it is all stiff and rugged and good. I was hoping for an honest to God brawl but they take it to the mat early and often so it was more in the lines of a proper BattlARTs shootstyle approximation- which is fine- especially since the suplexes were all pretty great, but the outside the ring ass-stomping was tentative and they didn't actually kick the lungs out of the back of the other. I wanted more, but what I got was a good wrestling match and I'll take that any day of the week.

Alexander Otsuka/ Katsumi Usuda vs Yuki Ishikawa/ Minoru Tanaka:

I CANNOT figure out Alexander Otsuka. He is either the worst wrestler in BattlARTS or some kind of eccentric wrestling visionary. He goes to the mat HARD with Yuki Ishikawa and then REALLY HARD with Minoru Tanaka in what looks like one of those controlled shoots that they have in the beginning of these matches a lot of times. Since Otsuka knows that no one is gonna actually hit a submission, he starts to improvise on the mat- rolling through at odd times, exposing his limbs to obvious openings for submission holds, getting totally out of position- even to the point of turning his back while in a pseudo guard position- and then spinning back through to a conventional wrestling counter position. It was weird but really cool looking- a sort of style that leads me to think that he is more influenced by Dos Caras and Villano III than Fujiwara and Maeda- and that's Number One and The Best in My Book. If he never does a Giant Swing again, then I will truly say that Alexander Otsuka is a fine, fine pro style wrestler who is just Too Weird For Prime Time. Usuda is the secret weapon of BattlARTS: Stiff as living fuck, Stoic to the point of excess, fast as greased lightning- he puts the Battle in BattlARTS. HEY! Maybe I should say that Otsuka puts the ARTS in Bat...AH CRAP! He and Tanaka strike for a while and it looks like Usuda busted his arm up a bit after a truly SWANK urecan on Tanaka so he tags out and it gets even weirder as Otsuka and Ishikawa go back to the mat, but this time Ishikawa schools Otsuka every way possible- setting up their singles match later at the beginning of 98. Tanaka comes in and randomly sells Otsuka's strange foray into Pro Style and they do a cool section where Otsuka tries two FisherMan Busters with Tanaka countering into a rolling kneebar on the second. This goes right into a section where Minoru counters every Pro Style hold that Otsuka attempts (German Suplex, Full Nelson- going into a Dragon I assume) with a Rolling Kneebar- which was pretty beautiful and conceptual and shit. Otsuka goes all shootstyle on Tanaka's ass to save face from both these jerks making him look like a pro style tailhole and then gets in two HIDEOUS Germans on Minoru Tanaka that HAD to suck. Otsuka fakes a Dragon Suplex, rolls it into a Cross-Armbreaker that Tanaka counters by swinging his legs around opening him up to an ankle-lock by Otsuka thus getting the submission for the bald wonder. I'm glad that the men who are called BattlARTS have now had a really good match that didn't involve Ikeda beating

the holy hell out of someone. This stayed on the mat and was pretty fascinating, if flawed. GET SOME OF THIIIS!

NWA TV Highlights (9/22/90-11/23/90)
(PHIL THE RIPPER)

Going through the archives is always entertaining. What wasn't entertaining was the TWO Black Scorpion segments. FOUR El Gigante sightings. Numerous Nasty Boy matches AND interviews. Oh yeah, Missy Hyatt was doing some commentary. Well, this is the best of the best.

Brian Pillman/ Tom Zenk vs. Ric Flair/ Arn Anderson:

Okay, everybody who rules take one step forward. Not so fast, Z-Man. This was a time when Arn was the TV champ. The Horseman were feuding with Doom and Pillman was wearing his disturbingly small Cincinnati Bengals tights. This much was just great. The crowd was really into it including popping madly when Pillman slaps a figure-four on Flair. Fortunately for everyone, Zenk stays outside of the ring for almost the entire match. Flair chops and wows a lot and Pillman shows why he would have been great if not for injuries. Ending comes when Arn gets DQed for DDTing Zenk on the floor. I will give 3 guess who was booking this. (HINT: The announcers talked about the Black Scorpion).

Midnight Express vs. The Southern Boys:

The Southern Boys are Tracy Smothers and Steve Armstrong and in the absence of the Fantastics or Rock N' Roll Express, they are the Express' rivals. The winner got a shot at the US Tag Titles. The NWA had so much quality and depth in the tag team ranks at this point that they had two titles and at least 6 teams that they could do various booking with. They had the Express, Boys, Doom, Flair/Anderson, the Steiners. Hell, I will even throw in the Freebirds and the non-injured Rock N' Roll Express. Now we get the Giant vs Sting in a winner gets to pick who he gets to blow after the match. Still everything wasn't rosy because the Nasty Boys were being pushed heavily at this time too. ANYWAY, the match has this neat like martial arts standoff between Stan Lane and Smothers which Jim Ross does an excellent job getting over. The ending dragged this baby down as the Freebirds ran in and I hate Michael Hayes and Jimmy Garvin a little more now.

Rock N' Roll Express vs. Arn Anderson/ Ric Flair:

Well this kicked my ass, your ass and the asses of the three people in the next room. Everyone is working quickly and crisply. A great sequence comes when the Express hits stereo enzeguris then put on figure-fours on both men. Arn then does the crawl-across-the-ring-and-rake-the-other-guys-eye-trick which he follows up with quite the nifty spinebuster. The more you watch Arn, the more you realize how underappreciated he was when he was in his prime and why now we are all lamenting that he is retired. Plus you are treated to a nice clean finish that was just as much of a rarity 8 years ago as it is now.

Arn Anderson vs. Tim Horner:

Hey look!!! It's White Lighting!!! No really, Horner is great. Plop this match on Nitro today and no one would know a difference. The TV Title was over as a credible title. The match lasted a good 8 minutes and the announcers spent 60% of the time talking about Sting. Horner works at like Warp Factor 8 and this was before most Americans knew there were people wrestling south of the border.

Tommy Rich vs. Moondog Rex:

Sometimes the truth is funnier than anything I could make up. Everything I am about to write actually took place in this match. We are told that Rex is currently ranked #8 in the Heavyweight division. Ross calls Rich a "youngster". Rex gets the pin by hitting Rich with a bone. His victory earned him a US Title shot against Lex Luger. The replay was sponsored by Turbo Grafix 16.

Midnight Express vs. The Steiners:

This was before Scott Steiner had gotten too used to the sweet, sweet taste of steroids to the point that his biceps look like they could take out an eye. Meanwhile, the Express teaches Heel Tactics 101 and it is great. Plus, Bobby Eaton shows what a true man he is by taking a wicked shot to the ring post, delivers two clotheslines stiffer than any Steinerline, ever. Plus he shows that Rick was just as sloppy then as he is now, by nearly being crippled by the top-rope bulldog. Besides all that, Scott breaks out a Tiger Driver and the finish is all hot and wildly entertaining.

The Renegade Warriors/ Allan Iron Eagle vs. The Freebirds/ Barry Horowitz:

This was so bizarre and great on some sadistic level. The Freebirds had been promising a mystery partner to take on the supposed Native Americans. Well everyone thought it would be Little Richard Marley (God save the queen). Instead they bring out Horowitz, who is wearing the face paint and the eye glitter just like 'Birds. BUT WAIT! it gets better. The match lasts two minutes with the Freebirds double-teaming Iron Eagle and then allowing Horowitz to get the pin. Horowitz starts jumping all around yelling about how he did it. And Ross starts screaming "first victory on national TV" Aaaaaahhhhhh, Barry Horowitz- the only man who can have the same angle in 3 federations.

BATTLARTS BATTLE STATION (2/11/98)
(DEAN RASMUSSEN)

Katsumi Usuda/ Yamoru Okamoto vs Tomoaki Honma/ Minoru Fujita:

This match frickin ROCKED. Usuda, Okamoto and Big Japan Junoir Tourney Gedo Fodder Honma are three of the best strikers in BattlARTS and they do a WHOLE lot of striking in this baby. Fujita takes it to the mat in between having his ass handed to him and this momma goes way up the stiffness scale at certain points. So to speak. Usuda is the most unkind to the young Fujita as he really nails him the face three times with some tooth-loosening goodness. Usuda and Honma take it to the mat like an alligator ripping the head off of a deer which sets up a weird foray into high-flying as Fujita does a toprope dropkick to the back of Usuda which sets up a German suplex which allows Honma to hit a toprope headbutt. As someone said (RevRay:)), "this isn't your father's shootstyle promotion." Usuda gets irritated and beats the holy pee out of

Honma in a sequence that is quite breathtaking in its sheer dickishness. Okamoto then comes in and Ray Guy's the living hell out of Honma's face in a move that had me looking on in wistful misty-eyed awe. Usuda tags in and Honma and he REALLY start beating the holy hell out of each other until Honma finally gets Usuda to the mat for a Sharpshooter. Honma taunts Okamoto and the scope of ass-holishness that Okamoto displays in crushing Honma's spinal cord was just transcendently spectacular. Honma tries another one and Usuda turns it into a ankle-lock for the submission. Ah yes, the reason I love BattlARTS....

Masao Orihara vs Mahammed Yone:

Yone is so very right in the middle of the BattlARTS roster and Orihara is one of the most irritating wrestlers in Japan- talented but lazy, tendency to under or no-sell, bad hair, etc.(though his match against Yuji Yasoraoka in WAR last year is absolutely fabulous.) This match was quite the throwaway as Orihara's second-rate Gedo impersonation falls flat in the context of following the beauty of the fabulous tag match. Yone has to sell every crappy Memphis heel tactic that Orihara can muster. Ah the simple elegance and dynamic performance of the Zenith VCR remote control fast forward option....

Fujiwara vs Ikudu Hidaka:

HEY! It's Fujiwara and it's stinky!

Tiger Mask IV/ Naohiro Hoshikawa vs Diasuke Ikeda/ Takeshi Ono:

I think I have been waiting for this match my entire life. I cannot lie to you fine people anymore- I hate (not as a person but as a wrestler) Tiger Mask Four. He's a big overpushed pansy who doesn't have any of the coolness or danger of anybody else in Michinoku Pro. He's Yakushiji with a cool mask and he can't even match Yak's meager offense when it comes to dynamicism. Hey! I've got a lot more respect for him now because Ikeda and Ono JUST BEAT THE HOLY SHIT out of him and he takes it like a man. It looks like he even gets pissed and tries to potato Ono after Ono gives him the Win, Place, and Show In The Cavalcade Of Magnificent Surly Dickish Moves: the straight right to the jaw from outside the ring right after Diasuke Ikeda has just kicked his frickin pancrease into the third row. Hoshikawa is just a fellow victim in this one as nobody can match the stiffness of Ikeda when he really feels like like kicking the shit out of someone. The Men Behind BattlARTS look down upon TMIV and feel aghast about the beating the poor lil fella succame to and allow him to make Ono submit to him. Ono beats the hell out of the ref postmatch for kicks. This was fucking great.

Minoru Tanaka vs Yoshihiro Tajiri (UWA Middleweight):

Baffling, baffling match. Schnieder hated it. Rev Ray loved it. I'm torn. Tanaka and Tajiri square off again and this time it's for Tanaka's belt and it's in BattlARTS so I was figuring on Tajiri finally going all shootstyle on Tanaka's hinder since they had a basic Tajiri match in the Big Japan Junior Tourney, but instead they go WAY the other way- with Minoru exploring his... crap, I don't know... his secret Lucha roots maybe? He does an Orihara moonsault. IN BATTLARTS. Minoru Tanaka that is. Tajiri goes into total lucha mode- hitting every roll-up, rolling cradle variation, and bizarro-boy submission he can conjure up. I think it's an experiment that failed because Minoru is really good at shootstyle and so is Tajiri and to abandon that when they haven't ever explored

it fully is a waste, I think. If their Big Japan match was vastly different than this, I would have maybe felt differently. It definately didn't suck, I just wasn't expecting what they delivered and that's a bad thing for once.

Yuki Ishikawa vs Alexander Otsuka:

This starts really great with these two hitting the mat and then hitting each other really hard. Otsuka can't really strike so he does a lot of real hurty looking headbutts to counter Ishikawa punching him in the face. They work for submissions for a whlie and it's really cool in a neato weirdo mat-wrestling kind of way and then Otsuka succumbs to the urge to counter a cross Armbreaker with a Giant Swing (of all things). The problem is that after doing it Otsuka is completely blown up so the mat work goes into great Muta matwork as they lay on the mat for five minutes, killing everything. The ending could have been cool as Ishikawa fights out of three Pro Style suplexes to get the shootstyle submission, but by that time nobody was awake. This wasn't good. But the rest of this is REALLY worth getting a hold of.

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THE (return of the condensed) ALLMIGHTY CUTOOT BIN!

111111 "Lightning" Mike Quackenbush vs. Reckless Youth (?!/?):

Well the matched is clipped. Yep, I'm watching Indy wrestling and I get a match that is clipped. Okay fine. Well both of these guys are not afraid to kill themselves. Don't believe me? Well, Quackenbush hits what can only be called a reverse Splash Mountain. What ever it is, it now is my favorite move. Quackenbush then hits a super nasty dragon suplex. Reckless gets his opportunity by hitting a side Death Valley Driver that rocked. These two kept it to the mat more than they usually would but it still worked. Only the presence of Reckless' manager- The Diamond Studd- brought this baby down. (the Ripper)

2222222 ALL JAPAN (3/29/98):

Kakihara/Takayama/Kobashi v. Albright/Williams/Hawkfield:

This match gets here for 3 reasons. 1. Albright dumps Takayama directly on his head with a belly to belly double arm suplex. 2. Albright does the Rock 'n Roll Express rolling tag to his corner, which is even funnier because there's no one on the apron for him to tag to, so he sits there like a dumbass waiting for Williams to get off the floor. 3. Takayama totally blows a chokeslam on Williams. The rolling tag gets this a million billion stars and that clip should end up on a comp tape some place. (Rev/PogoPete)

3333333 EMLL (12/97):

El Hijo del Santo vs Negro Casas (Hair vs Hair):

This was REALLY great. It differed from the classic Casas/Santo battles from yesteryear in that it skipped the nifty state of the art mat stuff mixed with breathtaking highspots and went straight to these two trying to kill each other. There is only one truly beautiful plancha by Santo the rest of this match might as well have been Harley Race against Dick Murdock fighting over a bar tab

in a west Texas bar. Yes, it was THAT frickin great. Indescribably great and the barber with the cool sequinned coat does the honors. Figure out who YOU have to CRUSH to get THIS tape.

4444444 NEW JAPAN TV (4/25/98, taped 4/4/98) :

Tenryu/Shiro Koshinaka v. Satoshi Kojima/Tatsumi Fujinami : This one gets mention in the cut out bin for one main reason. During the match, Kojima gets his nose busted up. The first time around when I saw it, I thought it was an accident, when reviewing the tapes with Pete, he informed me it was apparently a planned spot. Going back, it's pretty brutal as Shiro and Tenryu really just go wobby on Kojima's face, from punches, to stepping on his face. Yeah, I can see any big two wrestler letting someone hardway bust up their nose for an angle (Mick Foley excluded). As far as the match goes, Tenryu seems to be trying pretty hard and he's work pretty stiff (except for his powerbomb and old man enzugiri). It's a pretty ok match.

NEXT WEEK: Those secret WCW handhelds we told you about last week! ARSION! J'd! CMLL IN JAPAN: THE FINAL FLOOR-SCRAPINGS! OTHER STUFF! WHIP ASS!

For Rev Ray, Phil Schneider, Phil Ripper, and a big thank you to Pogo Pete (come back WHENEVER you want to) this is Dean Rasmussen saying "I hate to see you go but I LOVE to watch you leave!"Uh....

I first met you. You were in Blue Jeans. Your eyes couldn't hide. Anything.
-Kangaroo by Big Star, World's Greatest Band.